STILL WATERS RUN DEEP

A CHILD IS FATHER TO THE BAND
THE RETURN OF BRIAN WILSON/BY TIMOTHY WHITE

"Well, I feel I have something to say in music, in records. What I'm trying to get across is an attitude, a feeling about staying cool and all those little things in life that put you together. I'm just saying something about them, because I feel it's needed. You walk down around and see this grim stuff and it really makes you cry. And when you cry over something it means it got to you. Do you know what I mean?

—Brian Wilson, 1976

There would be no exceptions; Fred Morgan was adamant *about that.*

As music instructor at Hawthorne High School, Morgan had warned his 12th grade Piano and Harmony class—especially the college-bound students—that they must *complete* all *the course requirements if they expected to pull a final mark of 'B' or better.*

Brian Wilson, a tall, timorous-but-attentive boy with wavy brown hair and a sad, distant smile, was one of Morgan's most promising pupils, despite the handicap of a deaf right ear. The 17-year-old Wilson's hearing had been damaged in an anonymous accident that occurred in early childhood, yet he was still having difficulty accepting life as a monophile. *Morgan had been understanding, even allowing Brian to sit closer to the piano during class; but he felt there was* no *excuse for his senior slump.*

Truth was, Brian had allowed his position on the varsity baseball team (he was a centerfielder) and his involvement in a rock combo (The Pendletones) to distract him from his music lessons. He'd also been spending too many evenings hanging out at the Foster's Freeze on the corner of 120th Street and Hawthorne Blvd. when he should have been home studying. Morgan wouldn't have minded so much if Brian had been an average student, but the boy had early-on demonstrated considerable musical aptitude; his knack for arranging was particularly impressive.

Nevertheless, Brian had adopted a lackadaisical attitude towards his Piano and Harmony course during the last quarter, and so what could have been a uniformly meritous final report card was subsequently marred:

English	*B*
Government	*B*
Physical Education	*A*
Spanish III	*B*
Senior Problems (Personal Psychology)	*B*
Piano & Harmony	*C*

"Brian was the most quiet one of the bunch in his class," Fred Morgan recalls. "He was a nice boy and a good student and was fairly popular with his classmates because he had a good laugh. There was a portion of each class during which I would sit at the piano and play something, and everyone had to write down the notes. I remember Brian was very good at that; he had a quick mind.

"But I had to give him a 'C' for the year because he did not do what he was supposed to do. He did not finish his harmony exercises, for one thing. The exercises consisted of blocking in additional harmonic parts in a piece of music after the soprano part, let's say, had been supplied.

"Most important, he did not write a sonata. The major requirement of the course was to compose a piano sonata before the year was out; the project took the place of a final examination. Brian did not do a piano sonata, and so I gave him an 'F' for the project and a 'C' for the course. Instead of writing a sonata, he wrote a song called 'Surfin'.' I had nothing against the song; it was nice, but it just wasn't what I asked him for."